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BD40 million training budget set for Bahrainis

MANAMA: More than BD40 million will be spent on training Bahrainis this year, it was revealed yesterday.

Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala said the Government and private sector together spent more than BD30m on training last year, at a conservative estimate.

This included BD18.5m paid by the 10 top companies in Bahrain.

By SOMAN BABY

They are Bapco, Batelco, Alba, Banoco, Banagas, GPIC, Asry, Gulf Air, Bahrain Airport Services and Y B A Kanoo.

Mr Al Sho'ala said the Government spent BD9.5m on various training activities for Bahrainis last year.

"The training levy paid by companies in the private sector amounted to

BD1.8m," he said.

"More than BD2m was also spent by companies for their in-house training activities."

Mr Al Sho'ala said the total amount

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expected to be spent this year was more than BD40m. "According to estimates, the total amount spent by the other five

states of the GCC annually on training programmes is about BD750m," he said.

"The figures show that the training sector holds a very high business potential in the Gulf region.

"As such, the market offers promising prospects for training institutes of proven track record and those keen to maintain and promote high standards of quality and excellence," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

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Bahrain

on creating skills hub

centre of excellence by maintaining the credibility of the training programmes offered," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

He said the administrative unit would co-ordinate efforts, evolve promotional campaigns and encourage reputed international training organisations to invest in upgrading the quality of training activities in Bahrain.

It will also take steps to ex-

pand the potential client base in the GCC states.

"The Labour and Social Affairs Ministry will render all possible support including processing of registration formalities and work permits," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

"The ministry will assume the role of a catalyst and encourage institutions to offer courses based on market demand and the needs of the economies of the region."

Mr Al Sho'ala said it was important to note that an excellent opportunity existed for the private sector to establish and run training institutes on a commercial basis.

"The market potential is immense considering the fact that the need for training is recognised throughout the GCC region," he said.

"As such, training programmes will not be restricted

to Bahraini nationals; instead they will be open to all, including expatriates."

Mr Al Sho'ala said initial steps had already been taken towards the implementation of the strategy.

"Financial institutions are being approached through the concerned authorities to perceive training as a serious and viable business activity and as such be provided with the necessary fa-

cilities wherever required," he said.

Mr Al Sho'ala said more than 10 international companies had already expressed their desire to set up training facilities in Bahrain.

"Negotiations with the companies from Britain, India, France, Switzerland and Belgium are at an advanced stage," he said.

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■ **FESTIVAL ... Cabinet Affairs and Information Minister and President of National Council for Culture and Arts Mohammed Al Mutawa last night opened the third Al Ayam Cultural Festival at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre. Present were Education Minister Abdulaziz Al Fadhel, Electricity and Water Minister Abdulla Juma, Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala, Shura Council members and top officials.**